**The Championship Game**

Bobby Harris wiped the sweat from his forehead as he stood on the sidelines of Grant Field. Even though it was already October, the sun was beating down on the two teams battling for the county’s junior league football championship. The Cobras were losing 20 to 7, but there was still a chance they could win. Bobby’s twin brother, Ritchie, had just caught a 15-yard pass and then run twelve more yards before being tackled. Bobby and the other defensive players were watching the action on the field from the sidelines.

Bobby turned around and looked up at the crowded wooden bleachers. He could see his father, Joe Harris, standing on the top bench, waving the Cobras’ banner enthusiastically above his head. Bobby could single out his father’s booming voice: “That’s my son! Yep! That’s my boy! Great hands, son!” Bobby wanted to believe that their dad equally enjoyed watching both of his sons play football.

Sometimes believing that took a lot of effort. After all, Bobby knew that it was usually Ritchie’s plays, not his own, that sent their dad leaping to his feet.

When the next play began, Ritchie caught the ball, sidestepped two guards, faked out the last Lion defender and scored a touchdown. The scoreboard clicked to 20–13. The Cobras’ players and fans went wild. Now Ritchie was getting ready to attempt the kick for the extra point. That point could make a big difference in the outcome of the game. Bobby watched his brother eye the football that was resting on the tee. Ritchie didn’t even glance at the player who was holding the ball. One step, two steps, kick. Just like that. The score was now 20–14.

*Ritchie knew he was going to make it. He had no doubt at all.*

Bobby remembered the conversation he had had with his father a few days before. Bobby had said, “Dad, Ritchie and I are twins. Why can he run faster, throw harder, and kick better than I can?”

Mr. Harris had looked at his son thoughtfully and answered, “Bobby, your skills are just as good as Ritchie’s for the position that you play. But defensive players never get the fame that the ball carrier gets. You know that no football team can win without a good defensive line. Don’t worry. The coaches see what you do. They know. I know. I think you know, too, how good you are.”

Bobby shrugged his shoulders. Mr. Harris continued, “There is one thing you might want to work on, son. You need to believe more in yourself. Work on your confidence. Do you know what I mean?”

Bobby had nodded. He had understood what his dad meant, but he hadn’t known how he was supposed to get confident all of a sudden. Was he supposed to just wish it would happen?

The referee’s whistle interrupted Bobby’s thoughts, and he ran onto the field. He gave a thumbs-up sign to Ritchie, who was in position, ready to kick the ball to the other team. His brother waved at him, and Bobby took his position on the forward line.

Once again, Ritchie kicked the ball and sent it flying. The Lions receiver caught it and ran it to midfield, where he was tackled by Ritchie.

*He always seems to be at the right place at the right time. Always!*

As the teams moved quickly into their huddles after the play, Bobby was shocked to see that Ritchie was still lying on the ground. He shouted to the coach and ran toward his brother.

“Ritchie, Ritchie, are you okay?” Bobby asked, leaning over his brother.

“I think I broke my kneecap,” Ritchie said, choking back his tears. “Man, it really hurts!”

The referee called for a time-out, and the team trainer and coach carried Ritchie to a bench on the sidelines. During the time-out, both teams huddled.

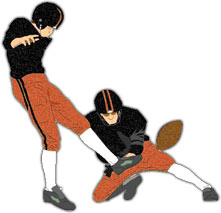
Soon, the Cobras’ coach joined the huddle and gave them their orders. “Listen up. The Lions are going to try to run the ball right up the middle. They won’t pass it, and they won’t go off to the left or right,” he said. “I want you to stop their run up the middle. I’m counting on you to stop it cold.” The referee blew his whistle to signal that the game was ready to begin again.

Bobby looked at the clock. Three minutes left. He glanced at his brother, who was now sitting on the bench. The trainer and team doctor were with him.

In position, Bobby’s heart began to pound as the Lions’ quarterback yelled, “Hut one, hut two, hut three!” As soon as the Lions’ center snapped the ball, Bobby rushed between the guard and the center.

To Bobby’s surprise, he realized that for once he was in the right place at the right time, just as the quarterback leaned forward to hand off the ball to his fullback. Quickly, Bobby snatched the ball from the quarterback and sped down the field.

He could hear the crowd yelling, “Run, Bobby! Run!” The pounding feet behind him let Bobby know that the Lions’ players were gaining on him. Sure enough, five yards from the goal line, Bobby felt a hand on his shoulder. He dove across the goal line. He had scored a 75-yard touchdown! Again, the crowd roared their approval. The score was now tied 20–20. If the Cobras could make the extra point, they would be the county champions. Suddenly, it struck Bobby that without Ritchie, they didn’t have a solid kicker.



The Cobras’ coach ran onto the field and gathered the team around him. “Boys,” he said. “This is it! There are ten seconds left on the clock. Ritchie is hurt. He can’t kick. Bobby, I know that you and Ritchie practice kicking together. Do you think you could kick the extra point?”

“Can I? Yes, I can, Coach,” Bobby said. “I’m confident!”

“OK, boys. Then let’s get it done!” Coach answered back.

Bobby kicked the ball and watched it sail right between the goal posts. Even over the roar of the crowd, he thought he could hear his dad shouting, “That’s my boy! Did you see that run? Did you see that kick? He’s got some legs, that boy! Legs of steel!”

1. In the beginning of the passage, why is Mr. Harris standing and cheering enthusiastically?
2. Ritchie ran twelve yards after catching a pass.
3. Mr. Harris wanted to let Bobby know he was proud.
4. Bobby caught a long pass and ran for a gain of ten yards.
5. Mr. Harris was trying to signal the coach that Ritchie was hurt.
6. What caused Ritchie to get injured during the football game?
7. Richie tackled a player from the other team.
8. Bobby asked a teammate to jump on Ritchie.
9. Richie kicked the ball too hard to the other team.
10. Bobby collided with a teammate and fell on Ritchie.
11. What was the result of the conversation between Bobby and his father before the game?
12. Bobby believed his father loved his brother more than him.
13. Bobby decided he needed more practice kicking field goals with his brother.
14. His father convinced Bobby his brother was a better football player than him.
15. His father told him his position on the team was just as important as other positions.
16. Bobby was able to get the ball from the quarterback because
17. Bobby recognized the play pattern.
18. the quarterback stumbled on the ball.
19. Bobby was in the right place at the right time.
20. the quarterback dropped the ball the first time.
21. The reason Bobby was able to kick the extra point was because Bobby
22. asked his coach for help.
23. had support from his dad.
24. gained confidence in himself.
25. practiced more than his brother.
26. At the end of the passage Bobby learns
27. his brother is never going to be able to play again.
28. to be successful you have to believe in yourself.
29. to win a game you have to hurt the star player.
30. his father loves his brother more than him.
31. As used in the passage, which pair of words is most SIMILAR in meaning?
32. caught, attempt
33. leaning, choking
34. trainer, receiver
35. gathered, huddled
36. With which statement would the author of “The Championship Game” most likely agree?
37. It is difficult to come back from a losing game.
38. You can achieve your goals if you trust your abilities.
39. Playing football is a good way to learn about families.
40. Football is a dangerous sport in which players are easily injured.
41. Which sentence from the passage best describes the illustration?
42. Bobby kicked the ball and watched it sail right between the goal posts.
43. His brother waved at him, and Bobby took his position on the forward line.
44. Sure enough, five yards from the goal line, Bobby felt a hand on his shoulder.
45. As soon as the Lions’ center snapped the ball, Bobby rushed between the guard and the center.
46. What is the main problem in “The Championship Game”?
47. Bobby misses the winning kick and disappoints his father.
48. Ritchie gets hurt and the team thinks they will lose the game.
49. Ritchie feels bad that his father only ever cheers for his brother.
50. Bobby has a hard time believing that he is just as good as his brother.

Answer Key:

1. Correct Answer A, DOK 2
2. Correct Answer A, DOK 2
3. Correct Answer D, DOK 2
4. Correct Answer C, DOK 2
5. Correct Answer C, DOK 2
6. Correct Answer B, DOK 2
7. Correct Answer D, DOK 2
8. Correct Answer B, DOK 3
9. Correct Answer A, DOK 2
10. Correct Answer D, DOK 2